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CHILDREN, FAMILIES, HEALTH AND HUMAN SERVICES INTERIM COMMITTEE

69th Montana Legislature

SENATE MEMBERS

John Esp
Dennis Lenz
Cora Neumann
Mike Yakawich

HOUSE MEMBERS

Melody Cunningham
Jodee Etchart
SJ Howell
George Nikolakakos
Melissa Nikolakakos

COMMITTEE STAFF

Milly Allen – Lead Staff
Maddie Krezowski – Legal Staff
Emily McKay – Legal Staff
Jolanda Songer - Secretary

MINUTES LOG

May 05, 2026
Room 152
Helena, Montana

Minutes logs provide an annotation of the time elapsed between the beginning of a meeting and the time at which a topic is presented or discussed, a motion made, or a vote taken. The time designation may be used to locate the referenced discussion in the video. The minutes log is only a guide to the video of the meeting. The official record of the meeting is the video. Minutes logs can be accessed at <https://committees.legmt.gov> and videos can be accessed at <https://media.legmt.gov>.

For more information, please contact:

The Legislative Services Division at 406-444-3064 for policy committees;
The Legislative Fiscal Division at 406-444-2986 for fiscal committees; or
The Legislative Audit Division at 406-444-3122 for the Legislative Audit Committee.

MEMBERS PRESENT:

Rep. Jodee Etchart, Presiding Officer (R)
Rep. SJ Howell, Vice Presiding Officer (D)
Rep. Melody Cunningham (D)
Sen. Dennis Lenz (R)
Rep. Melissa Nikolakakos (R)
Sen. Mike Yakawich (R)

MEMBERS EXCUSED:

Sen. John Esp (R)
Sen. Cora Neumann (D)
Rep. George Nikolakakos (R)

MEMBERS ABSENT:

STAFF PRESENT:

Milly Allen, Lead Staff
Maddie Krezowski, Legal Staff
Emily McKay, Legal Staff
Jolanda Songer, Secretary

COMMITTEE ACTION

AGENDA [\(Attachment 1\)](#)

VISITORS' LIST [\(Attachment 2\)](#)

CALL TO ORDER/ROLL CALL

09:00:50 Presiding Officer Jodee Etchart called the meeting to order at 9:00 AM. The committee secretary took roll.

AGENCY OVERSIGHT: DEPARTMENT OF PUBLIC HEALTH AND HUMAN SERVICES (DPHHS)

Overview

09:01:39 Charlie Brereton, Director, DPHHS

[EXHIBIT 1](#)

H.R. 1 Implementation

09:04:36 Rebecca de Camara, Medicaid and Health Services Executive Director, DPHHS
(See Exhibit 1)

09:06:54 Sen. Cora Neumann joined the meeting.

09:09:22 Jessie Counts, Executive Human Services Director, DPHHS
(See Exhibit 1)

09:14:01 Sen. John Esp joined the meeting.

Committee Questions / Discussion

09:34:05 Sen. Dennis Lenz

09:34:17 Jessie Counts, DPHHS

09:35:26 Sen. Mike Yakawich

09:36:17 Jessie Counts, DPHHS

09:37:23 Rep. Melissa Nikolakakos

09:37:55 Jessi Counts, DPHHS

09:40:12 Director Charlie Brereton, DPHHS

09:40:42 Rep. Melody Cunningham

09:41:12 Jessie Counts, DPHHS

09:43:32 Vice Presiding Officer SJ Howell

09:43:50 Director Charlie Brereton, DPHHS

09:44:36 Rebecca de Camara, DPHHS

09:48:55 Jessie Counts, DPHHS

09:50:23 Sen. John Esp

09:50:43 Rebecca de Camara, DPHHS

09:51:15 Sen. Cora Neumann

09:52:43 Director Charlie Brereton, DPHHS

09:53:54 Rebecca de Camara, DPHHS

09:56:08 Vice Presiding Officer SJ Howell
09:56:43 Jessie Counts, DPHHS
09:57:31 Director Charlie Brereton, DPHHS

Rural Health Transformation Program

09:59:12 Gene Hermanson, Deputy Medicaid Director, DPHHS
(See Exhibit 1)

Committee Questions / Discussion

10:15:30 Sen. Cora Neumann
10:16:01 Director Charlie Brereton, DPHHS
10:16:31 Rep. Melody Cunningham
10:17:10 Gene Hermanson, DPHHS
10:17:37 Presiding Officer Jodee Etchart
10:18:01 Rebecca de Camara, DPHHS
10:19:10 Director Charlie Brereton, DPHHS
10:19:26 Sen. Mike Yakawich
10:19:52 Director Charlie Brereton, DPHHS
10:21:22 Sen. Cora Neumann
10:21:38 Gene Hermanson, DPHHS

Child and Family Service Review (SFSR) Program Improvement Plan (PIP) Pilot

10:22:54 Jessie Counts, DPHHS
(See Exhibit 1)

Committee Questions / Discussion

10:26:30 Sen. Dennis Lenz
10:26:43 Jessie Counts, DPHHS
10:27:53 Director Charlie Brereton, DPHHS

Behavioral Health System for Future Generations Update

10:28:56 Meghan Peel, Administrator, Behavioral Health and Developmental Disabilities
Division, DPHHS
(See Exhibit 1)
10:36:54 Director Charlie Brereton, DPHHS

Committee Questions / Discussion

10:37:43 Sen. Cora Neumann
10:38:22 Meghan Peel, DPHHS
10:40:04 Sen. John Esp
10:40:18 Meghan Peel, DPHHS
10:40:41 Sen. Mike Yakawich

10:41:18 Meghan Peel, DPHHS

Montana State Hospital: Continuous Improvement and Recertification Update

10:42:35 Matt Waller, Health Care Facilities Executive Director, DPHHS

(See Exhibit 1)

Committee Questions / Discussion

10:45:31 Sen. John Esp

10:45:54 Meghan Peel, DPHHS

Forensic Mental Health Facility Update

10:46:20 Matt Waller, DPHHS

(See Exhibit 1)

Public Comment

10:49:06 Jamie Palagi, Chief Executive Officer, Intermountain

10:51:27 Dandilion Cloverdale, Missoula

10:53:19 Drenda Niemann, Association of Montana Public Health Officials, Confluence
Public Health Alliance

10:55:31 Keegan Nashan

10:58:12 Jackie Semmens, State Government Relations Director, American Heart
Association

10:59:29 Andria Schafer, Health Policy Analyst, Montana Budget and Policy Center

[EXHIBIT 2](#)

11:01:41 Mary Collins, Policy Director, Healthy Mothers, Healthy Babies

11:03:30 Dillon Sarb, Catalyst Montana

11:05:22 Mike Chavers, Chief Executive Officer, Yellowstone Boys and Girls Ranch &
Member of Behavioral Health Alliance of Montana

11:07:57 Cassie Wick, Ability Montana

11:09:33 Alice Deshay, Butte

11:11:22 Matt Bugni, Chief Executive Officer, Aware Inc.

11:13:25 Diana and Othoniel Mall

11:16:42 Travis Hoffman, Policy Director, Summit Independent Living

11:18:04 Sierra Reisberg, Executive Director, Behavioral Health Alliance of Montana

11:18:59 Tiana Albery

11:19:41 Kyla Hailstone

11:21:00 Presiding Officer Jodee Etchart

11:21:39 Director Charlie Brereton, DPHHS

11:22:21 **Recessed**

11:36:32 **Reconvened**

ORGAN DONATION PROCESS OVERVIEW

11:36:53 Ashlei Lind, Director of External Affairs, LifeCenter Northwest

[EXHIBIT 3](#)

Committee Questions / Discussion

11:54:37 Sen. John Esp

11:56:02 Ashlei Lind, LifeCenter Northwest

11:56:17 Rep. Melody Cunningham

11:56:57 Ashlei Lind, LifeCenter Northwest

11:57:35 Sen. Mike Yakawich

11:58:29 Ashlei Lind, LifeCenter Northwest

AGENCY OVERSIGHT: ADMINISTRATIVE RULE REVIEW & PROVISIONAL DRAFT LEGISLATION

Administrative Rule Review

11:59:56 Emily McKay, Legal Staff, Legislative Services Division (LSD)

[EXHIBIT 4](#)

Review of AO 1.1, Provisional Draft Legislation

12:03:17 Presiding Officer Jodee Etchart

[EXHIBIT 5](#)

12:06:25 Milly Allen, Lead Staff, Legislative Services Division (LSD)

[EXHIBIT 6](#)

12:09:35 Presiding Officer Jodee Etchart

Committee Questions / Discussion

12:11:27 Rep. Melody Cunningham

12:11:55 Sen. Cora Neumann

12:12:44 Presiding Officer Jodee Etchart

12:13:57 Sen. John Esp

12:14:23 Presiding Officer Jodee Etchart

12:15:03 Milly Allen, LSD

12:15:47 Vice Presiding Officer SJ Howell

12:16:01 Presiding Officer Jodee Etchart

12:16:27 Rep. Melody Cunningham

12:18:36 Rep. Melissa Nikolakakos

12:18:55 Rep. Melody Cunningham

12:19:26 Presiding Officer Jodee Etchart

Public Comment

12:23:04 Stephen Martin

12:24:59 Dr. Sam Budoff

PUBLIC COMMENT ON ANY MATTER WITHIN THE SCOPE OF THE CHILDREN, FAMILIES, HEALTH, AND HUMAN SERVICES COMMITTEE THAT IS NOT ON THIS AGENDA

12:28:07 Teresa Gardner, Helena

[EXHIBIT 7](#)

12:32:05 Abigail St. Lawrence

12:35:40 Leanna Troesh

12:37:18 **Recessed**

13:50:59 **Reconvened**

PUBLIC COMMENT ON ANY MATTER WITHIN THE SCOPE OF THE CHILDREN, FAMILIES, HEALTH, AND HUMAN SERVICES COMMITTEE THAT IS NOT ON THIS AGENDA - Continued

13:51:23 Diana and Othoniel Mall

SENATE JOINT RESOLUTION 37: REVIEW OF AVAILABLE BEHAVIORAL HEALTH SYSTEM INFORMATION

14:05:02 Milly Allen, Lead Staff, Legislative Services Division (LSD)

[EXHIBIT 8](#)

[EXHIBIT 9](#)

[EXHIBIT 10](#)

Committee Questions / Discussion

14:21:08 Sen. John Esp

14:21:57 Presiding Officer Jodee Etchart

14:22:14 Milly Allen, LSD

14:26:11 Sen. Dennis Lenz

Public Comment

14:28:38 Leanna Troesh, NRT Montana

14:33:33 Sierra Riesberg, Executive Director, Behavioral Health Alliance of Montana

Next Steps

14:35:09 Milly Allen, LSD

14:36:14 Sen. Cora Neumann

14:36:46 Presiding Officer Jodee Etchart

14:37:13 JJ Carmody, Billings Clinic - Logan Health

14:39:11 Sen. Dennis Lenz

14:39:19 JJ Carmody, Billings Clinic – Logan Health

14:41:49 Sen. Mike Yakawich

14:42:23 JJ Carmody, Billings Clinic – Logan Health
14:44:31 Sen. John Esp
14:45:43 Milly Allen, LSD

**HOUSE JOINT RESOLUTION 26: REVIEW OF PROVISIONAL DRAFT LEGISLATION -
GUARDIANSHIP AND CONSERVATORSHIP**

14:47:49 Milly Allen, Lead Staff, Legislative Services Division (LSD)

[EXHIBIT 11](#)

[EXHIBIT 12](#)

Public Comment

15:07:08 Rep. Brian Close, House District 65

[EXHIBIT 13](#)

Committee Questions / Discussion

15:12:48 Sen. Mike Yakawich
15:13:14 Rep. Brian Close
15:14:25 Sen. John Esp
15:14:56 Milly Allen, LSD
15:15:50 Rep. Brian Close
15:16:55 Vice Presiding Officer SJ Howell
15:18:37 Rep. Brian Close
15:19:31 Sen. John Esp
15:20:02 Rep. Brian Close
15:20:23 Vice Presiding Officer SJ Howell
15:20:54 Rep. Brian Close
15:21:07 Milly Allen, LSD

Public Comment - Continued

15:22:38 Patrick Kelley, Government Affairs Director, Alzheimer Association of Montana

[EXHIBIT 14](#)

15:24:19 Fran Viereck, American Association of Retired Persons (AARP)
15:26:30 Beth Russo, Government Affairs Director, AARP National Office
15:29:13 Christa Gabriel, Disability Rights Montana

Committee Questions / Discussion

15:30:37 Vice Presiding Officer SJ Howell
15:30:53 Milly Allen, LSD

15:31:10 **Recessed**

15:45:39 **Reconvened**

SENATE JOINT RESOLUTION 48: REVIEW OF PROVISIONAL DRAFT LEGISLATION - MARIJUANA

Review of First Provisional Drafts - Senate Joint Resolution 48 1.1

15:45:45 Milly Allen, Lead Staff, Legislative Services Division (LSD)

[EXHIBIT 15](#)

[EXHIBIT 16](#)

Public Comment

15:59:18 Leanna Troesh, Safe Montana

16:04:05 Erin Landguth, Center for Population Health Research, University of Montana (UM)

16:06:17 Cindy Leary, Center for Population Health Research, UM

16:10:49 Ron Paulick

Committee Questions / Discussion

16:12:53 Sen. Mike Yakawich

[EXHIBIT 17](#)

16:16:57 Vice Presiding Officer SJ Howell

16:18:32 Milly Allen, LSD

16:22:10 Sen. Mike Yakawich

16:22:28 Vice Presiding Officer SJ Howell

16:22:48 Rep. Melody Cunningham

16:24:27 Cindy Leary, UM

16:26:57 Erin Landguth, UM

16:27:26 Sen. Mike Yakawich

16:27:53 Milly Allen, LSD

16:28:54 Sen. Mike Yakawich

16:30:39 Rep. Melody Cunningham

16:31:09 Milly Allen, LSD

16:32:15 Sen. Dennis Lenz

16:35:30 Sen. John Esp

16:36:58 Sen. Dennis Lenz

16:38:11 Presiding Officer Jodee Etchart

16:39:00 Milly Allen, LSD

16:42:38 Sen. John Esp

16:43:16 Presiding Officer Jodee Etchart

Review of First Provisional Drafts - Senate Joint Resolution 48 2.1

16:44:28 Milly Allen, LSD

[EXHIBIT 18](#)

[EXHIBIT 19](#)

Committee Questions / Discussion

16:52:12 Sen. Mike Yakawich
[EXHIBIT 20](#)
16:53:58 Vice Presiding Officer SJ Howell

Public Comment

16:55:11 Leanna Troesh
16:59:54 Judy Mortensen, Great Falls

Committee Questions / Discussion

17:03:13 Presiding Officer Jodee Etchart
17:03:51 Milly Allen, LSD
17:06:33 Sen. Mike Yakawich
17:07:49 Presiding Officer Jodee Etchart
17:08:20 Sen. John Esp
17:08:59 Milly Allen, LSD

WORK SESSION

17:10:23 Presiding Officer Jodee Etchart
[EXHIBIT 21](#)
17:12:12 Sen. Dennis Lenz
17:15:51 Sen. John Esp

Legislation

17:16:53 Milly Allen, Lead Staff, Legislative Services Division (LSD)
17:19:09 Vice Presiding Officer SJ Howell
17:21:16 Milly Allen, LSD
17:23:29 Presiding Officer Jodee Etchart
17:24:45 Rep. Melody Cunningham
17:25:13 Vice Presiding Officer SJ Howell
17:26:15 Milly Allen, LSD
17:28:04 Rep. Melody Cunningham
17:28:40 Milly Allen, LSD
17:30:11 Sen. Dennis Lenz
17:31:32 Sen. John Esp
17:32:03 Sen. Mike Yakawich

Additional Discussion

17:32:52 Sen. John Esp
17:36:19 Presiding Officer Jodee Etchart
17:36:40 Milly Allen, LSD

ADJOURNMENT

Adjournment: 17:37:24